

*Embassy of the United States of America
American Citizen Services Branch
24 Grosvenor Square
London W1A 2LQ*

ADOPTION

This handout is designed to provide general information and guidelines for U.S citizens who wish to adopt a child from within the United Kingdom or bring a child adopted from a third country into the United Kingdom or the United States. However, the Embassy cannot become directly involved in the adoption process.

United Kingdom Adoption Procedures

The British Department of Education and Skills is responsible for Children's Social Services, including adoption policy. In general anyone over 21 can legally adopt a child. The United Kingdom does not have a statutory upper age limit. However, each local authority has the power to determine if a prospective adoptive parent is above its acceptable age limit on a case-by-case basis. Married couples must adopt "jointly," unless one partner cannot be found, is incapable of making an application, or if a separation is likely to be permanent. Unmarried couples may not adopt "jointly" although one partner in that couple may adopt. Residency requirements are set on a case-by-case basis by the local social services department.

Documentary Requirements for the United Kingdom Adoption: A person must be approved for adoption by their local social services department before a child can be identified. A detailed home study will be conducted by local social services or an "approved adoption society". The latter tend to be church or charitable organizations. A list can be obtained from the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (www.baaf.org.uk). A medical clearance and a full police background check are also required.

United Kingdom Fees: There are no specific costs set by the British government. However, home studies conducted by a British Social Services Department generally costs between £3500.00 and £4500.00.

Once you have been approved for adoption by the British authorities and you wish to adopt from overseas then you may wish to contact the following departments for further assistance on this issue:

The Adoption Team
Placement, Permanence & Child Protection Division
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8UG
Website: www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption
e-mail: info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

International Social Services
3rd Floor, Cranmer House
39 Brixton Road
London SW9 3DD
Phone: 020-7735-8941
e-mail: issuk@charity.vfree.com

You must also apply to the nearest British Embassy/Consulate to obtain clearance for the child to enter the U.K. The Home Office Immigration Service has an information package (RON 117) that explains the procedures for obtaining entry clearance. You can contact the Home Office on 020-8686-0688 or write to them at Lunar House, Wellesley Road, Croydon CR9 2BY.

Please note: You may commit a criminal offense if you adopt a child overseas with the intention of bringing the child to the United Kingdom without being approved for adoption by the British authorities.

United States Adoption Procedures

If you wish to adopt outside the U.S. with the intention of returning to the United States with your adopted child, you should as a first step contact the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service within the Department of Homeland Security (<http://www.uscis.gov>) for the many details of who may be considered an “orphan” for adoption and the petition procedure. If you live in the United Kingdom, you may contact Department of Homeland Security (Immigration) at DHS, American Embassy, P.O. Box 2444, London W1A 5WT. If the DHS petition is approved, you apply at the Embassy for an immigrant visa for the child, since your adopted child will not have an immediate claim to U.S. citizenship.

If you are resident temporarily in the U.K. and wish to adopt a child from another country, there are several steps to follow. There are many agencies in the U.S. that are licensed to assist American families overseas in the adoption process. You should contact your state’s Department of Human Services for a listing of registered adoption agencies. You are cautioned to be extremely skeptical of anyone claiming to be able to arrange to find a child for adoption and expedite the paperwork if they are not formally registered in the United States.

Briefly, you must first arrange for the child to be released in accordance with the law of the country in which the child resides. This may involve a full-scale adoption or it may be as simple as obtaining a signed consent from the natural parent(s). Contacting the country’s Embassy in

the U.K. may provide some information about that country's particular adoption requirements and procedures. The child has to be cleared by his/her own government to leave that country.

Whatever your situation, it is strongly recommended you obtain as much information as possible in advance about the various requirements and formalities. This may allow you to have some of the necessary documentation prepared, thereby limiting unnecessary delay.

The following reference sources may be able to provide further information and advice:

- The International Adoption booklet published by the U.S. Department of State can be found at: http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/notices/notices_473.html
- British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Skyline House, 200 Union Street, London SE1 0LX, Telephone: 020-7593-2000, Fax: 020-7593-2001 E-mail: mail@baaf.org.uk. This charity organization has several helpful publications and can advise on how to locate a child for adoption in England and Wales. The website <http://www.baaf.org.uk/> is the best resource for information regarding adoption in the UK, and you may also write or call with specific questions.
- Adoption UK, 46 The Green South Bar Street Banbury OX16 9AB Telephone: Tel: 01295 752240 Fax: 01295 752241 Website: <http://www.adoptionuk.org>. This organization provides independent support, advice and information regarding the adoption process in the UK.
- Directgov website provides information about official policies and useful contacts - <http://www.direct.gov.uk/Audiences/Parents/AdoptionAndFostering/fs/en>
- Intercountry Adoption Centre, 64-66 High Street, Barnet, Herts EN5 5SJ. Phone: 020-8449-2562; Fax: 020-8440-5675. The website: www.icacentre.org.uk

Adoption procedures in England and Wales are governed by the Adoption Act of 1976. A copy can be obtained from Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 49 High Holborn, London WC1, Telephone: 020-7873-0011.